

Message Text

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SUBJECT: INTERNAL ORGANIZATION OF ADVISORY COUNCIL

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 3011 AND PREVIOUS

BEGIN SUMMARY. THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL HAS FINALLY AGREED ON ITS INTERNAL REGULATIONS AND HAS STARTED WORK ON DEVELOPING A NEW ELECTORAL LAW FOR THE 1979 ELECTION. THE TRADITIONAL PARTIES AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR ARE PREDICTING THAT THE ADVISORY COUNCIL WILL BE A FAILURE. AT THIS POINT IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO JUDGE HOW EFFECTIVE IT WILL BE IN ADVISING THE GOVERNMENT ON MATTERS OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE.

END SUMMARY.

1. ON DECEMBER 31, 1975 CHIEF OF STATE MELGAR ANNOUNCED THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENTION OF ESTABLISHING AN ADVISORY COUNCIL. AT THE SAME TIME HE ANNOUNCED THAT NATIONAL ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD IN 1979. THE TAKS OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL WERE ANNOUNCED AS DEVELOPING AN ELECTORAL LAW TO BE USED TO GOVERN THE 1979 ELECTION AND TO GIVE ADVISE TO THE GOVERNMENT ON ISSUES OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE.

2. IN EARLY 1976 THE TASK OF SETTING UP THE ADVISORY COUNCIL WAS UNDERTAKEN BY MELGAR. VIRTUALLY ALL SECTORS OF HONDURANS WERE QUESTIONED ABOUT THEIR DESIRE TO SEND REPRESENTATIVES TO THE COUNCIL. AFTER SEVERAL MONTHS OF CONSTANT INTERVIEWS ALMOST ALL SECTORS AGREED TO SEND SELECTED REPRESENTATIVES. HOWEVER, THE LIVERAL AND NATIONAL

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PARTIES TOGETHER WITH COHEP (COUNCIL OF PRIVATE ENTERPRISE) REFUSED

TO PARTICIPATE BECAUSE THEY SAID THAT THEIR POINTS OF VIEW WOULD BE
OUTVOTED IN A BODY WHICH DID NOT TURLY REFLECT HONDURAN SOCIETY.

3. FINALLY, IN EARLY AUGUST THE COUNCIL WAS ABLE TO AGREE ON ITS
INTERNAL REGULATIONS FOR ORGANIZATION AND DEBATE. THE PRESIDENT OF
THE COUNCIL, LT. COL. CESAR ELVIR SIERRA (ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF),
NAMED THE FOLLOWING THREE BASIC COMMITTEES: THE POLITICAL AND
JURIDICIAL COMMITTEE, THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, AND THE
CULTURAL AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE. THE POLITICAL AND JURIDICIAL
COMMITTEE IS NOW STUDYING VARIOUS DRAFT PROPOSALS RELATING TO THE
FORMULATION OF THE ELECTORAL LAW.

4. BEGIN COMMENT. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL HAS TAKEN
A LONG TIME BECAUSE OF THE OPPOSITION OF THE TRADITIONAL PARTIES,
AND THE NATURAL DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED IN SETTING UP SUCH A BODY
IN A MILITARY-RULED SOCIETY. AS COULD BE EXPECTED, THE PARTIES
AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR ARE PREDICTING THAT IT WILL BE NOTHING MORE
THAN A DEBATING SOCIETY WITH NO POWER TO DO OTHER THAN SUGGEST
MEASURES THAT CAN AND WILL BE IGNORED BY THE GOVERNMENT. AT THIS
POINT IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO DETERMINE WITH ANY DEGREE OF CERTAINTY
HOW EFFECTIVE IT WILL BE. END COMMENT.

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